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A-126

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

72 OCT 14 01 00

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE 140850Z OCT 72 VIA CAS CHANNELS (BUNKER)
FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 0137 IMMEDIATE
TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER
REFS: A) WHS 2216; B) WHS 2217; C) WHS 2218

1. AT MEETING WITH THIEU THIS MORNING, I GAVE HIM A REPORT ON MEETINGS WITH THE OTHER SIDE HELD OCTOBER 8-11 AND TEXT OF THEIR LATEST PROPOSAL (REFS A AND B AND PREVIOUS MESSAGES). I EXPLAINED THAT FROM THE FIRST DAY THROUGH THE FOURTH THERE HAD BEEN A DECIDED MOVEMENT OF THEIR POSITION. IN THE EARLIER MEETINGS THEY PLACED MAJOR EMPHASIS ON SATISFYING THEIR POLITICAL DEMANDS WHILE IN THE LATER MEETINGS THEY PLACED INCREASING EMPHASIS ON PURELY MILITARY CONDITIONS.

2. I SAID THAT IT WAS YOUR JUDGMENT THAT THE OTHER SIDE MAY BE READY TO ACCEPT A CEASEFIRE IN PLACE IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE. THIS EMPHASIZES TWO IMPORTANT POINTS: A) THE NEED FOR OUR SIDE TO REGAIN AS MUCH TERRITORY AS POSSIBLE; AND B) THAT WE NEED TO HAVE ROOM FOR MANEUVER AND FOR FLEXIBILITY ON THE POLITICAL SIDE.

3. THIEU RESPONDED THAT HE BELIEVED RVNAF WAS MAKING SATISFACTORY PROGRESS IN REGAINING TERRITORY IN MR'S 1, 2, AND 4, BUT THAT HE WAS NOT SATISFIED WITH PROGRESS IN MR 3, ESPECIALLY IN BINH DUONG PROVINCE AND IN THE AREA NORTH OF SAIGON. HE SAID THAT HE HAD INSTRUCTED GENERAL MINH TO CLEAN OUT THE ENEMY QUICKLY AND "BRUTALLY". (I HAVE LOST TRACK OF THE NUMBER OF TIMES THIEU HAS TOLD ME OF HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO GENERAL MINH AND HAVE YET TO SEE THE LATTER PERFORM, ALTHOUGH GENERAL WEYAND TOLD ME TODAY THAT HE THOUGHT MINH WAS NOW DOING QUITE WELL.)

State Dept. review completed

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4. I POINTED OUT THAT THE OTHER SIDE HAD MOVED A CONSIDERABLE DISTANCE SINCE THEIR PROPOSAL OF AUGUST 1. THEY NO LONGER TALKED OF A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CONCORD, BUT OF AN ADMINISTRATION OF NATIONAL CONCORD WHOSE FUNCTIONS WERE LARGELY RESTRICTED TO SUPERVISORY DUTIES AND THAT UNTIL THE FORMATION OF THE DEFINITIVE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIET-NAM AFTER THE ELECTIONS, THE GVN AND THE PRG WOULD CONTINUE TO ADMINISTER THE REGIONS CONTROLLED BY THEM. THIS IN EFFECT MEANT THAT THE GVN WILL CONTROL WHAT THEY CONTROL NOW, AND THE PRG WOULD CONTINUE TO CONTROL WHAT THEY PRESENTLY CONTROL. THIS IN EFFECT IS WHAT THE DE FACTO SITUATION HAS BEEN ALL ALONG.
5. I SAID THAT YOU BELIEVE THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT THE OTHER SIDE MAY COME FORWARD WITH PROPOSALS MORE ACCEPTABLE THAN THOSE CONTAINED IN THE PLAN TABLED AT THE RECENT MEETINGS. WE SHOULD, THEREFORE, BE GIVING CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO WHAT POLITICAL TERMS WE ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT - WE SHOULD EXAMINE AGAIN THE PROPOSALS DISCUSSED WHEN GENERAL HAIG WAS HERE OR OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR A REASONABLE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT WE BE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO THE OTHER SIDE'S PROPOSALS IN A CREDIBLE POSTURE. WE MUST ALSO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE OTHER SIDE WILL PROPOSE A CEASEFIRE.
6. I SUGGESTED TO THIEU THAT HE GIVE THE MATTER FURTHER THOUGHT AND THAT WE MEET AGAIN ON MONDAY OR TUESDAY NEXT WEEK AND HE AGREED TO DO SO. I SHALL TRY TO PUSH HIM THEN INTO A MORE SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION. I MADE IT CLEAR WE DO NOT INTEND TO DROP HIM OR CONSIDER HIM EXPENDABLE IN ANY OF THE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH MAY BE AGREED TO, BUT THAT WE NEED HIS COOPERATION IN A WAY WHICH WILL DEMONSTRATE FLEXIBILITY AND ENSURE THAT HIS POSITION IS SOLIDIFIED.
7. WITH REGARD TO THE POLITICAL PRISONERS (REF C), I AM HAVING FIGURES CHECKED TO SEE HOW MANY OF THE 30,000 THOUSAND PRISONERS OTHER THAN POW'S MAY BE CONSIDERED POLITICAL PRISONERS. UNDER THE PHOENIX PROGRAM, THE TOTAL NUMBER DETAINED, PENDING TRIAL, AND UNDER INVESTIGATION WAS 9,707 ON SEPTEMBER 30. I WILL NEED TO GET SOME ESTIMATE OF HOW MANY AMONG THE OTHER PRISONERS CAN BE CONSIDERED POLITICAL. I WILL TRY TO SEND YOU AN ESTIMATE BY MONDAY OF WHAT I THINK THIEU WILL BE ABLE TO DO WITH RESPECT TO THESE.
8. WARM REGARDS.

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